

night. We have cut back on our police officers; we have let the assault weapons bill expire; we now cannot even have our police officers check to see if a criminal has bought a gun because in 24 hours the records are destroyed.

We are not going in the right direction. We can make a difference. I hope people will support this bill.

THANKING OUR ARMED FORCES FOR THEIR COURAGE, DEDICATION, AND BRAVERY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. POE). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to thank the men and women of our Armed Forces for the courage and the dedication that they have so bravely displayed while liberating and securing Iraq from tyranny and terrorism. Through their hard work and dedication, these Marines, sailors, airmen, and soldiers have succeeded in defeating terrorism and giving birth to a new democracy in the Middle East, one that will serve as a model for the entire region.

Every day, U.S. forces transfer more security responsibilities to Iraqis, giving them the tools that they need to secure their nation. Today, there are more than 150,000 Iraqi security forces who have been trained and equipped by the United States and our coalition forces. Iraqis now patrol Baghdad's hotspots, parts of Mosul, Fallujah, and Saddam's hometown of Tikrit.

Every week, between 1,500 and 3,000 new Iraqi security forces enter active duty, joining the U.S. and coalition forces in our joint battle against terrorism. By liberating Iraq, our fighting men and women showed the world that terrorism and tyranny would no longer be tolerated.

After 9/11, President Bush decided to take the fight to the terrorists; and, once again, our Armed Forces answered the call to service. Ever since, U.S. and coalition forces have spectacularly defeated Saddam's tyrannical regime and transformed Iraq for the better. Those who were once oppressed now rule Iraq, holding the highest offices of a democracy.

Having accomplished the great task of liberating the Iraqi people from the scourge of terrorism, our forces have remained in Iraq to assist in rebuilding the country. Our men and women in the military have built schools, hospitals, and other infrastructure to improve the lives of ordinary Iraqi citizens. They have restored electricity and water to the Iraqis who have suffered from three wars in one generation. Roads and bridges are being repaired to increase commerce. Our soldiers have been able to accomplish this and so much more, even though murdering terrorist gangs try at every turn to thwart their progress.

The valor and the courage of our Armed Forces in the face of this enemy

have been critical to the reconstruction of Iraq. This was exemplified by the recent visit of our Deputy Secretary of State to the once-terrorist stronghold of Fallujah.

I am proud that my stepson, Aviator First Lieutenant Douglas Lehtinen, is preparing to deploy to Iraq. He will join the thousands of U.S. soldiers who are bravely fighting to guarantee that future generations of Iraqis will not have to suffer under tyranny.

Some of these soldiers, such as my husband, retired First Lieutenant Dexter Lehtinen, as a platoon leader in Vietnam, have paid dearly for the freedom that so many of us take for granted. My husband, Dexter, was wounded by a grenade that almost took his life. Instead, today he carries the scars of battle to remind us that while freedom may not be free, it is always worth fighting for.

I am proud that my stepson, Dougie, chose to volunteer and to protect the country that we all love so much from those who desire to destroy it. To all the brave men and women who have, do, and will continue to serve our Armed Forces, thank you on behalf of a grateful Nation.

FOCUSING ON CONSTRUCTIVE SOLUTIONS TO U.S. IMMIGRATION POLICY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. GUTIERREZ) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GUTIERREZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise this evening to begin what I hope will be the start of a constructive dialogue about our Nation's immigration laws.

There has been a lot of heated rhetoric about this topic in recent months. But what I believe has been lacking from this debate is a discussion of real solutions and an accurate portrayal of the real contribution of our Nation's immigrant community.

In Congress, on cable shows and in newspaper columns across the country, we witness undocumented workers being unfairly and inaccurately blamed for all of our Nation's ills. In fact, it seems as though there are some cable show hosts out there who have made this practice the cornerstone of their programming. Just look at Lou Dobbs and his "Broken Borders" segment. If you ask me, it should be called the "Broken Record" segment. Because night after night after night, it is the same thing. It is about giving a platform to anti-immigrant extremists so they can espouse their misguided, misleading, and often malicious views.

Mr. Speaker, I am the first to admit that our Nation's immigration system is simply not working. It is not meeting the needs of our Nation, it is damaging families, and it is hurting businesses. But rather than targeting Windex-wielding cleaning ladies, we should be talking about practical solutions.

Do these individuals actually believe we should deport the more than 10 mil-

lion undocumented working men and women working in this country? Do they think that is truly the answer? Let us say they say yes. Do they think our Nation has the will or the requisite resources to round up these individuals and ship them all off? If that is the case, I would simply ask them, what would life be without the more than 700,000 undocumented restaurant workers washing dishes and cleaning tables, 250,000 household employees, or the almost 1 million undocumented farm workers? These industries where these workers toil would literally come to a screeching halt if not for their labor. Their absence would cripple entire communities. Fruits and vegetables would rot on the vine, office buildings and hotels would go uncleaned, and children would go unattended.

So this evening, I thought I would set the record straight and give the folks at CNN and other news outlets a little unsolicited editorial advice. I think we should be talking in this country about mending borders. Rather than a segment about broken borders, why not create a segment about mending borders on your stations? How about a segment where elected officials, policy analysts, and immigration experts on all sides of the political spectrum discuss ideas and proposals for fixing our flawed immigration policy? How about, instead of endless footage of workers crossing the border, we see footage of real contributions of immigrants to our agricultural industry?

I wish I could turn on the television set one night and see scenes like this, by Rick Nahmias. This is the face of our immigrant community, right here, Mr. Speaker. It is back-breaking, thankless labor. These men and women are exposed to dangerous pesticides and punished by brutal working conditions. They lack safety equipment and have no place to send their children to school. Many of these workers wake up at 2 in the morning to take a bus to our fields, and they do not return until long after dark.

But this is why we have fresh fruits and vegetables at our grocery stores and on our kitchen tables. It is men and women like this in this poster who sustain our \$30 billion agricultural industry. According to the Department of Labor, at least half the 1.8 million crop workers in the U.S. are undocumented. That is the Federal Government.

I would like to show the next poster, one we never see on TV. The subtitle of the article is "Jobs Americans Won't Do." I wish everybody would read the front page of The Wall Street Journal on March 11. The Wall Street Journal article focuses on the challenges growers have finding workers. For example, ahead of a recent lettuce harvest, one grower took out ads in local papers for field workers to pick up the lettuce. He needed about 350 workers. The grower got one reply, just one reply. Mr. Speaker, the simple truth is our aging, more educated workforce is unwilling to pick the lettuce.